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ON THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

OF THE 21ST CENTURY WORKER

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Abstract

The 21st century American worker faces challenges unprecedented in his or her lifetime. The newly expanded global marketplace creates opportunities for employers to produce and sell products and services to more individuals and countries than ever before. However, the pressure of the new global economy places the burden on American employers to transform processes to be highly efficient and productive to remain competitive. Many American employers actively seek to recruit and train skilled employees worldwide who can meet their corporate need for profitability.

The American job seeker faces shifting local labor market industries, changing job titles and job descriptions, and the loss of job opportunities in many industries once seen as the backbone of the American workforce. In essence, the American worker faces the risk of being left behind and left out of the possible achievement of the American dream. The challenge of finding effective methods for increasing the skill set of the American workforce looms large and difficult. Many influences will shape the future of the American job seeker as they consider career track options. These influences include their own level of knowledge about job market opportunities and the skills required to perform these jobs; their own level of motivation to seek out training and education needed to meet the demands of the new industries; and ultimately their own level of confidence, or "self-efficacy" in their perceived abilities to succeed in high growth job industry occupations critical to the future health of the American economy and its' citizens.

Introduction and Background

The threats facing the survival and revival of the American workforce have never been greater. The American dream, passed down generation to generation, building on the belief that with enough hard work, a demonstrated work ethic, and the ability to persevere through uncertain times the American worker will be rewarded with personal and economic security, is materializing for today's worker as the 21st century nightmare. Financial security for hard-working Americans is no longer guaranteed in present work

opportunities or in future retirement security options. Simply finding and maintaining steady work and sustainable paychecks is an illusion for many Americans.

At the same time, employers nationwide report they can't fill many available positions because American workers do not have the skill set needed for the jobs of the 21st century. The New York Telephone, Inc., had to screen 57,000 applicants to find 2,100 who were qualified to perform entry level technical jobs (McKeenan, 1994). Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maine reports that high school graduate applicants not only have unsatisfactory skills, but it is their experience that the skills gap is getting worse every year (McKeenan, 1994). In a country in which a highly skilled workforce is critical, many Americans have only basic literary skills, and even these average skills are declining (McKeenan, 1994). All but a small percentage of Americans can read and write; but American literacy is based on old standards. Today, many industries demand computer literacy and the ability to understand statistical quality control measures and read complex manuals. Clearly, there is a growing disconnect between the skill set levels needed by corporations and the skills presented by the average American job seeker.

Secretary of Labor, Elaine E. Chao, clarified the growing threat of the "skills gap" to America's economic security. In a presentation titled "*Making America Work: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century Workforce* at the Summit of the 21st Century Workforce meeting held in Nashville, Tennessee (June 20, 2001), Secretary Chao warned that "America needs a wake-up call about its' workforce, because the threats that are impacting it will have huge economic consequences if we don't." She stated that three issues will impact the nation's economic strength in the decades ahead and shape the

quality of life of America's working families. These issues are the growing skills gap, our demographic destiny, and the future of the American workplace.

Referring to the skills gap, Secretary Chao warned that "throughout most of our lifetime, the chief economic challenge has been unemployment. But that is changing dramatically. The economy is still producing thousands of service and technology jobs that go unfilled, even with the downturn in the dot-com sector. That's because there is a growing disconnect between the new jobs that are being created and the current skill level of many people in America's workforce." Recognizing that if the workforce isn't ready to meet the demands of the new economy the "macro" effect will be a lower GNP and lost productivity, her main concern is on the "micro" impact of the skills gap. This effect will be felt by people who work hard in a job for years, only to lose the job to global competition, and then find the economy has passed them by. The Secretary warns "this will cut at the heart of the American dream – the belief that honest hard work will always open doors of opportunity" (U.S. DOL, 2005).

Utilizing new methods for reaching and teaching the 21st century job seeker is a critical next step for preserving the American dream and the future security of the American workforce. Recognizing the influences which motivate the American job seeker to gain the skills needed to contribute to the 21st century workforce is imperative in the design of recruitment and training programs targeting critical high growth job industry occupations.

Equally important is recognizing those factors which will not motivate individuals to action, but may instead decrease the level of confidence, or "self-efficacy," of

American job seekers as they pursue new skills and perceive viable career track opportunities.

Albert Bandura, the undisputed architect of the "self-efficacy theory" and lead researcher in this area, proposes that self-efficacy is a subjective phenomena, in that people can possess a high degree of talent or skill, but not see themselves as able to apply their capabilities consistently across a variety of situations (Bandura, 1977). The expert states that beliefs about self-efficacy affect a multitude of diverse factors: the decisions that people make; the amount of effort they put forth; their perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity; their tendency to think in ways that are self-hindering or self-aiding; and the amount of stress and depression that they experience in response to difficulties (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy is considered an important aspect of human performance, attitudinal learning, problem solving, and motivation (Petrovich, 2004). Research has shown that student's self-efficacy about their capabilities to cognitively process academic material can influence motivation and learning. Students who believe they will experience much difficulty comprehending material are apt to hold a low sense of self-efficacy for learning it; whereas those who feel they are capable of handing the information demands should feel more efficacious (Schunk, 1991).

During this pause in a dependable and skilled labor supply, American corporations are seeking solutions to the skill shortage through any means possible. Short-sighted corporate and government solutions are outsourcing America's future overseas and across the border. More must be done to reach and teach the American worker the critical skill sets needed in this new global marketplace to enhance self-

efficacy beliefs regarding capabilities to perform high skill trades and fill the nation's critical occupations in the projected high job growth industries of the 21st century.

Employment counselors and career coaches must approach these issues with resources and strategies effective at enhancing the self-perceived levels of knowledge, abilities, skills, and habits job seekers have for considering vocational options. Job readiness and placement remedies of the past, such as posting job openings in newspapers, or offering traditional job skill training classes, will not be enough to sustain the American worker's relevance when matched against global competition.

Employment counseling should focus on the causes of the low-efficacy perceptions that the job seeker presents, including focusing on the past experiences that may have formed the perception in the individual. As humans, we tend to avoid those things we fear, so we do not learn from it, and therefore we do not become good at it, and therefore continue to verify our perceptions of ourselves as incompetent in those areas (Betz, 2004). Workforce trainers must address these issues to successfully introduce career seekers to new opportunities in high growth job industries needed for our future.

Understanding How Career Decisions are Made

Many theories have been formed on the major influences encompassing an individual's career decision making process. A widely held belief is that in choosing an occupation, one is in effect, choosing a means of implementing a "self-concept" (Prediger, 2004). Clearly, one's self-concept may alter over time and will be influenced through events and experiences of the life cycle. The chronological cycle of modern life often includes the care and nurturing received through infancy and early childhood; followed by the growth, exploration, and educational training of adolescence; leading to

the occupational and familial involvements of adulthood; with an expected lifetime of employment through to retirement and ultimately old age and death (Wallulis, 1998). Research has shown that influences at any of these life cycle stages can influence one's self-concept, or one's "self-efficacy" about the skills and abilities they have to perform and master career-related tasks (Bandura, 1997).

One career development theorist states there are four distinct approaches to thinking about career options and career decisions (Osipow, 1973). One approach is based on the "trait-factor theory," which is seen as one of the oldest theoretical framework approaches to career counseling. This theory assumes there will be a straightforward match between an individual's abilities and the interests they hold towards an occupational or vocational field. A second approach, the "sociological career choice theory," believes in an "accidental" impact in career development, where circumstances beyond the control of an individual contributes significantly to the career choices one makes, and that the principal task of the job seeker is the development of techniques to cope effectively with one's environment. A third approach is based from the "self-concept theory." This approach holds at its' central core that an individual develops more clearly defined self-concepts as they grow older, although these vary to conform with the changes in one's view of reality. It also states that an individual will develop images of the occupational world which they will compare with their own self-image when trying to make career decisions. In this belief, the adequacy of the eventual career decision is based on the similarity between an individual's self-concept and the perceived vocational concept of the career one eventually chooses. The fourth approach is based on a "personality theory," whereby workers select a career choice because they

see the potential for the satisfaction of their personal needs through that choice, and that

exposure to the job gradually modifies the personality characteristics of the worker

(Osipow, 1973).

Throughout varied theories and approaches to career counseling, it is recognized

that one's own self-concept of their own abilities does influence career decision-making

interests and actions. Self-efficacy expectations are seen as a person's beliefs concerning

his or her ability to successfully perform a given task or behavior, and it is recognized

that these expectations of personal efficacy do influence the career decision-making

process and the motivation of career seekers to explore career options (Nevill &

Schlecker, 1988).

The term "career self-efficacy" is a general term meant to summarize the

possibility that low expectations or low self-efficacy with regard to some aspect of career

behavior may serve as a detriment to optimal career choices and development of the

individual (Betz, 1992).

Self-efficacy expectations are thought to develop through, and are modified by,

four sources of experiential information. These influences on self-efficacy include one's

performance accomplishments through success or failure; vicarious learning experiences

through observations of others performing tasks successfully; emotional arousal from

attempts to perform tasks, such as anxiety or fear; and the effect of verbal persuasion or

encouragement from others to continue to try to master a skill. These are perceived to be

the antecedents of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Increasing self-efficacy levels may mean the difference between an individual

reaching a career goal or giving up on an aspiration for a career goal that the individual

may have held since childhood (Betz, 1992). The consequences of perceived self-efficacy will lead to decisions between opening oneself confidently to a range of viable career choices, or closing oneself down to those career options in which the individual feels they should avoid, due to perceived low self-efficacy of ability to perform and master the tasks needed to successfully perform the tasks required (Betz, 1992).

Understanding the effect of the self-efficacy theory on how individuals perceive viable career options will be a critical step in the development of recruitment and training programs needed by American workers to explore and meet the demands of America's 21st century future high growth job industries.

Recognizing the 21st Century Skill Set for Workers

A survey of Fortune 500 corporations identified and ranked the following job skills as being the most critical for today's workers: teamwork, problem solving, interpersonal skills, oral communication, listening, personal career development, creative thinking, leadership, oral spelling, motivation, writing, and organizational effectiveness (Scott, 1999). Employers often cite the importance of employee attitudes, followed by an emphasis on generic skills over job-specific skills, being most critical for today's workers. One national survey of employers ranked applicants' attitudes and communication skills as the most important factors in hiring decisions. The conclusion from a review of multiple national studies was that employers seemed relatively satisfied with worker's technical skills, but employers do see a real need for increasing the generic skill set and improving worker's dispositions or attitudes related to the work being performed (Statsy, Ramsey, Eden, Melamid, & Kaiganoff, 1996).

The broad categories of generic skills needed by the 21st century worker include: basic or enabling skills, such as reading and simple mathematics; complex reasoning skills, used to solve both formal and everyday problems at work; work-related attitudes or dispositions, such as cooperative and team-oriented skills; and personal qualities, such as responsibility and sociability, all being critical factors that can affect learning and performance in the workplace (Statsy et al., 1996).

Transferable job skills are also important for workers in a shifting global marketplace. These skills are often seen as generic job skills that can be used in a variety of work settings. Transferable job skills have been grouped as communication skills (writing, editing, speaking, researching, translating, and interviewing); humanitarian skills (advising, coaching, counseling, mentoring, training, explaining, listening, and negotiating); creative skills (performing, cooking, designing, and inventing); organizational skills (teaching, deciding, delegating, scheduling, supervising, calculating, budgeting, evaluating, planning, and coordinating); analytical skills (analyzing, synthesizing, conceptualizing, categorizing, problem solving, researching, and observing); technical skills (repairing, building, keyboarding, measuring, testing, and programming); and physical skills (body coordination, dexterity, stamina, and strength) (Whitaker & Broen, 1995).

Today's workplace requires employees who not only have good basic and technical skills, but also have the ability to be flexible and adaptable, and who are able to take initiative and respond to the changes in work organizations (Taylor, 2004). The United States Department of Labor identified eight universal job skills needed for 21st century workers. This universal skill set includes: leadership and persuasiveness; the

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ability to help and instruct others; problem-solving and creativity; ability to take initiative; the ability to work as part of a team; skills needed for frequent public contact; and manual dexterity, physical strength and health (Lindeman, 2000).

One of America's most critical high growth job industries which require workers to possess the 21st century skill set is in the rapidly expanding and changing health care career field. Health care provider career opportunities will require the mastery of all eight of the universal skills for a worker to be successful in a role as a nurse or caregiver for a rapidly aging population. Health care career options expand far beyond the role of the caregiver, however, and may include occupations in a wide variety of roles which may or may not require involvement in patient care related duties. However, many job seekers may never explore a viable health care career track because of their perceived "self-efficacy" beliefs related to the skills and competencies required of the health care field. Job seekers may associate health care careers only with becoming a Registered Nurse (RN), or only as a Doctor, and they may not see themselves as having the skills, interests, or abilities to work under a crisis situation with a sick or dying patient.

Assisting a job seeker to understand the full range of career options available to them in the health care field, including career paths that do not require patient care or public contact, can assist in expanding the range of associations individuals make concerning health care occupations, and may assist in helping individuals recognize they do have the ability and interest in performing the specific skill sets needed in the different types of health care careers outside of the patient care specialties.

Career-coaching approaches designed to help the individual build higher levels of self-efficacy towards these critical skills industries, including the nursing industry, will

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assist our nation in both turning the tide to prevent critical worker shortages and bridge the gap to address and meet the employer skill set expectations for the American worker.

Meeting the Need for High Job Growth Industries

According to most economists, the increased demand for skilled labor from the nation's employers have outstripped the supply of skilled workers over the past decade (Holzer & Walker, 2003). However, American job seekers don't seem to really understand how the world and the 21st century workplace are changing. Fifty-seven percent of the American workers believe that their skills will be adequate in the years ahead, compared to just 13 percent of the Japanese workers (McKeenan, 1994).

The President's High Growth Job Training Initiative, as reported through the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, recognizes the impact of shifting industries in a new economy and the critical nature of the skill sets needed by American workers to fill projected high growth jobs for America's future.

President George W. Bush stated: "All the worker wants is to be helped, to be given the skills necessary to realize his or her dreams. The President's *High Job Growth Initiative* is aiming to do just that. It is a collaborative effort to help team up people with the jobs that are needed, to make sure that the changes in our economy don't leave people behind" (U.S. DOL, 2005).

The targeted industries in the President's *High Job Growth Initiative* include: automotive occupations; advanced manufacturing; biotechnology; construction trades; energy occupations; financial services; geospatial occupations; health care occupations;

hospitality industries; information technology occupations; retail services; and transportation (U.S. DOL, 2005).

Understanding how career seekers gain information about these industries, and how they perceive their own skill sets, or self-efficacy levels, in relation to the skills needed to perform these occupations, will greatly determine our nation's ability to fill these critical occupational areas.

America's aging demographics are changing medical care delivery and expanding health care career path options. According to the Administration on Aging, the number of persons aged 65 and older was 33.9 million in 1996; 34.7 million in 2000; growing to 39.4 million in 2010; and projected to grow to 53.2 million in 2020 (Brookhaven, 2004). Additional sources of new health care jobs will be in the rehabilitation field, health and fitness services, wellness and prevention programs, imaging technologies, nutrition services, and new diagnostic industries.

Our demographic destiny will have a dramatic impact on the need for skilled workers in these high growth industries. As baby boomers move into retirement there will be an increased demand for products and services for the elderly, and this soaring demand will create millions of new jobs to be filled by workers who span the spectrum from highly skilled (registered nurses), to moderately skilled (repair service technicians), to lower skilled (home health aides) workers (Judy & Amisco, 1997).

A growing senior population will need and will pay for services in the fields of entertainment industries; travel; leisure-time pursuits; specialized health care; long term care facilities; accounting and financial services; home and automobile repairs; and other

personal services which will fuel local labor market demand for skilled workers in regions and communities nationwide (Judy & Amisco, 1997).

Half of the fasted projected growth occupations will be found in the health care services industries. The Bureau of Labor statistics predict that while the private hospital industry is expected to grow slowly, employment in offices in health practitioners and in nursing and personal care facilities is expected to grow faster than in most other industries. However, health care manpower shortages are now common and many health care providers take months to locate qualified personnel to fill the jobs they have. An American Hospital Association survey found that 70% of the hospitals surveyed reported a lack of qualified candidates to fill critical roles (Brookhaven, 2004). Meeting these critical shortage needs will be challenging for all.

A critical problem facing America is that fact that many health care fields today are suffering severe labor shortages in these areas, and the prospect for building a skilled future health care workforce will rest on the ability to significantly increase many more individual's level of knowledge, interest, motivation, and perceived self-efficacy to be able to perform these critical and demanding roles to seek health care career options. Recognizing the impact of one's self-efficacy on the perception of career opportunities is imperative to trainers responsible for the recruitment of job seekers for high growth areas.

The Self-Efficacy Challenge in Recruitment and Training

Self-efficacy has been defined as people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to attain designated types of performance (Bandura, 1986). Bandura hypothesized that the self-efficacy beliefs effect

an individual's choice of activities, effort level they will expend to perform the activity, and the persistence they will maintain when faced with difficulty. People who have a low sense of self-efficacy for accomplishing a task may avoid it altogether.

An individual's own perception offers the most reliable guide for assessing efficacy. Successful experiences will usually raise efficacy levels, and experiences of failure will often lower efficacy. However, once a strong sense of self-efficacy is developed, a failure may not have as much of an impact on one's perception (Bandura, 1986). An individual also acquires capability information from the knowledge and successful experiences of others. Observing similar peers successfully perform a task will convey to the observer that they too are capable of accomplishing the task (Schunk, 1989).

It is recognized that individuals are not motivated to act in ways they believe will result in negative outcomes or failure (Schunk, 1991). Given adequate opportunity to master skills, with positive outcome expectations, and personally-valued outcomes related to the accomplishment, self-efficacy is hypothesized to influence the choice and direction of much of human behavior (Luzzo, 1996).

When planning to address the skilled worker shortage in America's projected high growth job industries, workforce trainers must recognize the effect of self-efficacy on these issues, and take steps to identify and measure self-efficacy levels of job seekers in relation to perceived skills needed to perform the associated tasks of those industries.

Self-efficacy may be seen in the form of confidence which workers may have in certain skill areas. Confidence is a function of many different habits and ways of reacting to the world around us. All of these reactions will propel an individual in various

trajectories of success or failure. Personal experiences can either enhance and build an individual's confidence, or undermine and destroy it. Ultimately, what confidence boils down to is the faith or belief that an individual can handle whatever situation arises, that the outcome will likely lean in their favor, and that the effort they take will make it happen (Kanter, 2004).

Our belief that things will happen one way instead of another can have an enormous effect on how these events actually unfold. If you believe that you will succeed at a task, it increases the chances that you will. Confidence is seen as the bridge connecting expectations and performance; investment and results (Kanter, 2004).

How do these self-efficacy beliefs affect an individual's confidence in exploring or pursuing a new career track opportunity? What affect does experiences of success or failure, support or disregard, have on the individual's belief that they can master new skills and explore challenging career options?

If self-efficacy levels are developed in one's early learning stages, the challenge of gaining the skills needed for the 21st century workforce may loom even larger for many Americans. It is reported that almost half of American youth start life behind, and never receive the support they need to catch up. Almost half of American children are born into circumstances that predict a high risk of school failure. Alarmingly, only 53% of preschool children are read to by their parents every day (McKeenan, 1994).

The experiences our youth are given to learn new skills and explore career options will also affect our ability to build our 21st century workforce. A report on youth stated that the United States is not alone among the industrialized nations facing stiff economic competition from low-wage developing nations in the shifting global marketplace.

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However, America is alone in facing that competition with a poorly trained workforce. Virtually all of our global competitors have opportunities for youth to learn through nationalized apprenticeship programs designed to provide skills training, mentorship, and positive work experiences, and only the United States has virtually no such system (McKeenan, 1994).

Providing youth and adult job seekers with the marketable skills and experiences they need is only half of the battle in building high levels of self-efficacy and confidence in their potential. Just as important, if not more important, will be training the worker to adapt to the need for lifelong learning and continuous skill development, and to have the mental flexibility required to keep pace with the speed of change in a shifting global economy (McKeenan, 1994).

Adult learners will also come to the educational setting with several factors which affect their willingness and ability to comprehend and internalize lessons from teachers and trainers. These factors include the adult learners past life experiences, and how those experiences will have influenced their ability and willingness to comprehend and internalize information provided within a teaching setting. A second factor is related to self-concept or self-esteem through the perceptions they carry of themselves. Experience reveals that the adult learner who comes to a learning environment with a positive self-concept and high self-esteem are more able to participate in the learning process, and feel less threatened by the process (Okeele, 2003). Another factor in adult learning is the linkage of the topics being shared and the life experience of the learner. Adult learners appear to focus more attention on concepts directly tied to their current life situations. The extent of the learning process is directly tied to the problems and concerns of the

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adult learner, which in turn effect the extent of his or her dedication to the learning process (Okeele, 2003).

At the start of a learning activity, students will differ in their beliefs about their capabilities to acquire the knowledge, perform the skills, and master the material required. Initial self-efficacy levels will vary as a function of aptitude (attitudes and abilities) and prior experiences. Personal goal setting, information processing, and situational factors (rewards and feedback) do affect students while they are working and learning. From these factors students will derive cues signaling how well they are learning, which they will use to assess their efficacy for further learning (Schunk, 1991).

Motivation is enhanced when students perceive they are making progress in learning and progress working towards established goals. In turn, as students work on tasks and become more skilled, they maintain a higher level of self-efficacy for performing well. An attainable goal, along with the belief that it is attainable, will motivate people to action (Schunk, 1991).

Self-efficacy theory holds that the best predictors of behavior in specific situations are an individual's self-perceptions within those situations. Self-efficacy beliefs are not just about a person's skills, rather they are judgments about what one thinks they can consistently accomplish with those skills. Self-efficacy beliefs are hypothesized to influence the challenges people undertake; the effort they will expend in an activity; and the perseverance they will maintain in the face of difficulties. People's self-efficacy judgments also influence their self-regulation of thought patterns (e.g. worries, goal intentions, causal attributions) and emotional reactions (e.g., pride, shame, happiness, sadness), which have in turn, have been shown to influence motivation (Bandura, 1997).

High-efficacious individuals are not afraid to try challenging goals, cope with pain, and persevere through setbacks. Individuals with low self-efficacy, however, will avoid difficult goals, worry about possible injury, expend less effort, and give up in the face of failure (Feltz & Payment, 2005).

Personal performance accomplishments are thought to provide the most dependable efficacy information because they are based on one's mastery experiences. The influences of vicarious information, or learning through observing others perform tasks successfully, can be enhanced by factors such as one's perceived similarity to the individual performing the task. Persuasive information can build self-efficacy through verbal persuasion and encouragement, constructive evaluation feedback, expressed expectations and support, encouragement of positive self-talk, and support through positive imagery visualizing mastery of skills. Likewise, physiological information, including automatic arousals such as fear and anxiety when performing a task, will also have an effect on one's self-efficacy levels (Feltz & Payment, 2005).

Recognizing how each of these factor influence the ability of the American job seeker to acquire new information about career options; take action to attain training and education in those fields; persevere through difficulties or challenges during training; and value the skills they have gained as they take action to apply these skills to entering a new career field, are critical workforce training principles for the 21st century job seeker.

Conclusions and Recommendations

More than 20 years of research have now indicated that self-efficacy expectations do significantly influence career choices, performance, and persistence (Betz & Hackett,

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1986). The concept of approach versus avoidance behavior is one of the simplest, yet one of the most profound in impact in all of career development counseling. Approach behavior describes what a person will try, whereas avoidance behavior refers to things he or she will not try. Career exploratory and decision-making behaviors are essential to making good choices. When individuals avoid something, they give themselves no chance to learn it or master it. Low self-efficacy may be accompanied by negative self-talk, which often interfere with one's ability to focus on the task at hand, and thus impairs performance. In this regard, low self-efficacy, may be in effect, a self-fulfilling prophecy (Betz, 2004).

Several researchers provide effective tips and recommendations for creating a workforce training program designed to enhance learner self-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1997; Sterrett, 1998; Betz, 1992, 2004; Schunk, 1991; McKeenan, 1994; Petrovich, 2004). Based on the expert opinion of these self-efficacy researchers, the following training techniques can be incorporated into training methods to benefit learners:

- Build opportunities for successful performance attainment. When one has successfully performed a given task, one is more likely to believe that he or she can successfully perform the task again.

- Allow students to set performance goals for themselves. Achieving self-set goals lead to the highest self-efficacy levels in skill attainment and perceptions of skill mastery.

- Remember that self-efficacy is substantiated as learners observe goal progress, which they will convey as meaning they are becoming more skillful.

- Pursuing easier goals may enhance efficacy and motivation during the early stages of skill acquisition. However, difficult goals are more effective as skills develop, because they offer more information about personal capabilities.

- Demonstrate task performances and coach the learner to mastery through repeated practice and immediate positive and constructive feedback.

- Structure successful performance accomplishment opportunities, including breaking tasks into small, manageable steps, to ensure success and to build the learner's perception of mastery of each required skill.

- The repeated practice of skills has been found to be especially important to the retention and transfer of knowledge, and emphasizing variety in practice appears to enhance the transfer of skills to new situations.

- Provide strong praise and encouragement to the learner for accomplishments and progress made towards goals.

- Allow learners to watch and listen to each other to gain information through vicarious learning experiences, as they watch similar peers master tasks.

- Share success stories from current and former students and peers.

- Build group cohesiveness to stimulate mutual support and modeling.

- Use the effect of verbal persuasion, including the use of praise and encouragement, positive feedback, and the provision of needed resources.

- Provide antidotes to perceived stressful situations while learning, including the use of stress-reducing practices, such as deep breathing techniques, and positive self-talk modeling, to overcome physical automatic arousals of fear and anxiety.

- Remember that people are more likely to enact modeled behavior if they value the outcome, if the enactment is personally satisfying, and if the performance of the behavior being modeled enhances their sense of self-worth.

- Conversely, modeled activities are avoided if their effects are perceived as unrewarded. Social comparisons to others can be damaging to self-concepts.

- When the learners' performance has not improved, disparaging criticism lowers perceived efficacy and aspirations; whereas constructive criticism sustains aspirations and bolsters efficacy, encouraging the learner to persist rather than give up in the face of difficulty.

- When students are learning new skills, how they focus their attention becomes extremely important. Selective attention to poor performance undermines efficacy, while selective attention to success will enhance performance.

- Introduce the concept of self-efficacy in initial training discussions. Question the learner's beliefs in his or her competence in areas of relevant career decision making, performance expectations, and perceived ability to master required skills.

- Determine the learner's self-imposed limits on what they feel they can do.

- Remember that the learner will be influenced by the words you use, the actions you take, the verbal cues you provide, and the experiences they perceive.

- Strive to be a positive influence in the life of the learner and a positive contributor to America's challenge of meeting the workforce needs of the 21st century.

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